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ABSTRACT

This management guide is intended to help headteachers and senior leaders in middle schools (8- to 13-year-old pupils) in England to manage the National Literacy, Numeracy, and Key Stage 3 Strategies in ways that are practical and coherent. It brings together guidance issued separately by the three strategies, and focuses mainly on English and mathematics. The guide has the following 10 sections: (1) Background: the National Strategies; (2) the approach to teaching and learning; (3) managing implementation; (4) monitoring the Strategies; (5) allocating curricular time; (6) using data; (7) supporting school transfer; (8) organizing intervention programs; (9) provision for able pupils; and (10) summary and points for action. Throughout the guide, there are examples of how middle schools have successfully managed their implementation of the Strategies. (PM)

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Raising Standards in Middle Schools.

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Introduction

Middle schools have a unique opportunity to affect the life chances of their pupils. Getting education right for 8- to 13-year-olds is the key to their future academic motivation and success at GCSE. Middle schools have the strong advantage that they can plan this phase of education as a whole.

The approach to teaching and learning advocated by the three National Strategies has just the right note for this age group as pupils move from support to independence. This guide is intended to help headteachers and senior leaders in middle schools to manage the Strategies in ways that are practical and coherent. It brings together in one place guidance issued separately by the three Strategies. It focuses mainly on English and mathematics, since support for these areas of the curriculum is what the Strategies have in common.

The guide has ten sections.

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Throughout the guide there are examples of how middle schools have successfully managed their implementation of the Strategies.

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1 Background: the National Strategies

The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) for Key Stages 1 and 2 was launched in 1998, followed by the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) in 1999. Since then, the pace and rigour of teaching have improved in Key Stages 1 and 2. Expectations of pupils are greater and pupils are achieving higher standards by the end of each key stage.

The Key Stage 3 Strategy was introduced in September 2001 to build on these achievements. Its goals, which are compatible with the goals for Key Stage 2, are to raise standards by strengthening the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and improving the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9. Beginning with English and mathematics, it has broadened to include science, ICT and the foundation subjects. The Key Stage 3 Strategy also supports the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, thinking and reasoning skills, assessment for learning, and the development of subject leadership.

Frameworks for teaching English, mathematics, science and ICT extend to Key Stage 3 the advice offered in the primary Frameworks for literacy and mathematics. Summaries of the Key Stage 3 Frameworks are available from www.dfes.gov.uk/governor/index.cfm.

Next steps for the Strategies

As a senior leader in a middle school, you will want to be aware of national and local priorities to make sure that your own school's priorities for teaching and learning and curriculum provision build seamlessly across the key stages.

The current priorities for the three National Strategies are:

Literacy and mathematics in Key Stage 2

- strengthening school leadership and management of literacy and mathematics, including the roles of literacy and mathematics coordinators;
- strengthening the teaching and learning of:
  - writing and reading, particularly guided reading;
  - written and mental calculations and mathematical problem solving;
- making effective use of materials to support planning, teaching and learning, such as the Literacy Strategy's *Year 6 planning exemplification* (DfES 0135/2002), *Grammar for writing* (DfES 0107/2000) and *Spelling bank* (DfES 0086/2001) and the Numeracy Strategy's *Mathematics unit plans* (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/numeracy);
- consolidating and where necessary expanding support for underachieving pupils, through *Additional literacy support* (CfSS ALS100), *Further literacy support* (DfES 0359/2002) and *Springboard* (see section 8, page 25);
- teaching able pupils effectively;
- strengthening continuity from Year 5 to Year 6 in English and mathematics;

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Key Stage 3 English and mathematics

- strengthening transition from Year 6, and especially the teaching and learning of pupils who start Year 7 below level 4;
- consolidating use of the English and mathematics Frameworks (DfES 0019/2001 and 0020/2001) to support planning, teaching and learning, particularly in Years 8 and 9;
- strengthening the teaching of English grammar throughout the key stage, to support pupils' understanding as readers and skills as writers;
- supporting mathematics teachers with the teaching of algebraic and geometrical reasoning, linked to the teaching of thinking skills;

Key Stage 3 science

- introducing the science Framework (DfES 0136/2002) and reviewing the science curriculum;
- strengthening the management of science departments;
- establishing three hours per week for science in each of Years 7, 8 and 9;
- strengthening the teaching of scientific enquiry and key scientific ideas;

Key Stage 3 ICT

- introducing the ICT Framework (DfES 0321/2002) and reviewing the ICT curriculum;
- establishing an hour per week for discrete ICT lessons in each of Years 7, 8 and 9, supported by ICT teaching units for Years 7 and 8;
- strengthening the subject knowledge of non-specialist teachers of ICT;

Key Stage 3 foundation subjects

- strengthening the quality of planning, teaching and learning across subjects;
- supporting the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum;
- developing assessment for learning;
- teaching thinking skills;
- piloting a Framework for the teaching of modern foreign languages.

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2 The approach to teaching and learning

Professor David Hopkins, the Government's chief adviser on school standards, outlined his vision of powerful learning in his 2002 address to secondary headteachers. This section draws on this address and highlights the principles of teaching and learning that underpin the development of the Strategies.

Good learning involves active enquiry, not passive reception. It thrives in a climate where pupils are encouraged to take the initiative, be independent, and control and manage their own learning. The skilled teacher combines the teaching of subject knowledge with the creation of contexts and experiences for effective learning. This approach to teaching and learning should be embedded in the school's policy for teaching and learning and suffuse the whole curriculum.

Teaching skills

Consistent findings from research are that pupils learn more effectively when:

- teachers have high expectations for their pupils' learning and attainment;
- a significant proportion of lesson time is spent on academic activities – behaviour management and class organisation are well established and take up little time;
- pupils concentrate well on the work that they do;
- lessons have pace so that teachers cover more material;
- teachers spend most of their time actively teaching;
- teachers support pupils' application and independent work by providing prompts, frames, intervention and other forms of support;
- teachers structure information using techniques such as outlining content, signalling transitions between lesson parts, drawing attention to and reviewing main ideas;
- teachers present their lessons clearly and with enthusiasm;
- effective questioning by teachers reinforces learning objectives, involves all pupils and engages them in thinking for themselves;
- teachers provide 'wait time' before pupils respond, acknowledge correct answers and work with pupils who give partial or incorrect answers to give them a chance to improve their answers;
- teachers explain to pupils the criteria for assessing their work and encourage pupils to make self-assessments and set goals for their own learning.

These skills are vital for effective teaching. They help teachers to maintain classroom control and create an orderly environment for learning.

Learning skills

Teachers can also enhance pupils' achievement by helping them to become more competent learners. For example, if pupils are to develop the skills to study independently they need to learn how to:

- extract information and ideas from presentations by teachers, from television broadcasts, from the Internet, from books and other print materials, for example, by scanning, sifting, sorting and summarising;
- memorise information, for example, by using mnemonics;
- form and then test hypotheses and theories;
- acquire and invent concepts;

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- use metaphors to think creatively;
- secure and record new knowledge by presenting and communicating it to others in a variety of ways;
- work effectively with others to initiate and carry out cooperative tasks;
- monitor their own understanding by reviewing their personal progress and adjusting their plans and goals.

Taking action

The teaching and learning skills outlined above apply across the curriculum. Middle schools are in an ideal position to agree common approaches to teaching and learning across the key stages and to draw on the full range of training and support available.

case study

Developing teaching and learning

A cluster of five middle and two upper schools in Leighton Buzzard and Woburn felt that good continuity of high-quality learning experiences would secure progression in pupils' learning. The main aims of their two-year project were:

- *to establish a common curricular vision and a shared approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning;*
- *to improve pupils' achievement through the development of a stronger working partnership;*
- *to strengthen teachers' knowledge of pupils' levels of achievement.*

Subject panels, with representatives from each school, met each week. The schools agreed to avoid in-house meetings at that time. Previously, the panels had focused on determining which aspects of the programmes of study each school should teach and on moderation activities.

The emphasis moved two years ago to addressing issues of teaching and learning. Each panel produced a common learning programme for all pupils, identifying the main steps that pupils would have to take in order to 'graduate' from Year 8 to Year 9. The steps were expressed in 'child speak' to help pupils to understand expectations for their learning and their personal targets.

The project has involved discussion of approaches to teaching and learning, teacher exchanges, provision of exercise books that go with pupils as they transfer to their upper school, master classes for more able pupils and joint training for staff.

The progress that has been made to establish the desired continuity and progression is reflected in the strong relationships being established between the schools, greater independence on the part of pupils and improved national test results.

Using Strategy consultants to support teaching and learning

Teachers will meet their LEA's consultants in training and many will have had the opportunity to work with them in school. Consultants are a valuable resource. They bring enthusiasm and credibility and are up-to-date with the development of the Strategies. They also bring fresh expertise into a school and, importantly, they help to drive home the training into classrooms.

When you discuss with your consultants how best to use their time in school, aim to get them into classrooms where they can influence and develop actual practice.

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suggestions

Some suggestions for deploying Strategy consultants

You could ask your consultants to:

- co-plan and co-teach lessons with individual teachers;
- observe specific features of lessons and give developmental feedback;
- offer demonstration lessons or parts of lessons, such as a starter;
- contribute to the review of a subject, perhaps by sampling pupils' work or observing teaching;
- help to analyse the outcomes of a review and the specific action needed, and negotiate their role in the action;
- support a year team or subject team who are planning lessons or developing their scheme of work;
- recommend visits to observe a leading teacher of literacy/English, mathematics or science, or an advanced skills teacher;
- spend consultancy time with a senior or subject leader, coordinator or strategy management group to assist strategic planning;
- attend and advise staff meetings;
- give telephone support.

A middle school could have both primary and Key Stage 3 consultants working in school over the same period of time. Thinking through the outcomes that you want from consultancy will help you to decide how best to use consultants' skills to improve teaching and learning. For example, it may be better to have all the consultants visiting on the same day to combine their forces and work with a range of teachers on a specified aspect of provision. On the other hand, you might prefer separate visits, so that one or two teachers in each key stage can receive regular support over several weeks.

In some LEAs, consultants may work across key stages: for example, Worcestershire has consultants with middle-school experience, which can benefit the whole school. Some LEAs, as in Suffolk, have a lead consultant who oversees the work of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 consultants to ensure that a school does not experience 'consultant overload'.

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3 Managing implementation

The three main challenges that you are likely to face in your implementation plans for the Strategies are:

- to build on the literacy and numeracy developments begun in partner first schools so that there is good continuity when pupils transfer to their middle school part-way through Key Stage 2;
- to ensure a coherent approach to strengthening the quality of teaching and learning throughout the middle school, drawing on and bringing together the Literacy, Numeracy and Key Stage 3 Strategies, and providing effective coordination and leadership of these Strategies across the key stages;
- to ensure that work in Key Stage 3 in middle schools and partner upper or high schools is coherent and that momentum is not lost when pupils transfer part-way through Key Stage 3.

case *studies*

Ensuring a common approach

- *Year 7 teachers in the Radcliffe cluster in Milton Keynes meet regularly to undertake joint planning for the implementation of the Strategies. Colleagues from their partner schools join them. The LEA provides consultant support for the meetings.*
- *In Northumberland, schools are encouraged to work in partnerships of middle and high schools. For example, in English they work with their consultant to produce common curricular targets for each of Years 7, 8 and 9.*

Effective management

Headteachers and senior leadership teams play a central role in bringing about successful change in classrooms. Their direct involvement in an initiative gives it status and helps teachers to appreciate its importance and relevance. Evaluations of the Strategies have shown that the management factors associated with successful implementation are:

- the influence and active leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders;
- a focus on teaching and learning;
- the linking together of individual initiatives into a whole-school improvement strategy;
- the clarity of roles and responsibilities for leading improvements across the key stages and an effective action plan;
- the effectiveness of the professional development programme in supporting and motivating teachers, impacting on the quality of teaching and learning and helping the school to sustain developments.

For successful implementation, time is required for teachers to plan together, to reflect and discuss ideas learned on training, to observe each other teach and to gather formative data on the impact of the Strategies on pupils' learning.

Finding time is never easy and different schools try to resolve the problem in different ways. Strategies for finding time are best evolved with the whole staff.

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suggestions

Some suggestions for creating development time

Review your cycle of meetings. Aim to replace some of the meetings with staff development time. Make a rule that any subject meeting has at least 50% of its time devoted to staff development and disseminating ideas from training.

Encourage staff to 'bank' some non-contact time by covering colleagues. Pool the time gained so that individual teachers can be given half-day slots for professional development and planning.

Ask all members of the senior leadership team to provide each fortnight a small percentage of cover time which can be booked by staff.

Identifying a management group

There are a number of ways that you can allocate responsibilities for the Strategies across the key stages. For example, some middle schools have a subject leader who manages English in Key Stage 3 and who also coordinates literacy in Key Stage 2; other middle schools separate these two roles. Whatever your practice, the need for overall coordination and coherence remains.

Some schools have identified a senior manager to coordinate overall implementation of the Strategies and to lead a whole-school improvement management group.

A management group will need to agree recommendations on approaches to teaching and learning, targets, teaching time, intervention programmes, booster provision, and professional development for staff. The aim is coherence across the whole school and across the various initiatives in which the school is involved.

suggestions

Some suggestions for managing the Strategies

Identify a member of your senior management team to act as overall manager of the Strategies and to chair a management group.

Clarify the roles in the Strategies of teachers with management responsibilities for English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, the SENCO and the gifted and talented programme coordinator. Make them all members of the management group.

Choose other staff for the group to represent key departments, for example, science and ICT. Include one or two enthusiastic teachers from other subjects.

Arrange brief, regular meetings to pursue action plans and review progress.

Establish how information from the management group will get to other staff.

Give all subject leaders and coordinators progress reports at their usual meetings, since many issues are cross-curricular and link to various initiatives.

case studies

Identifying a strategy manager

- *One middle school in Milton Keynes has identified an experienced teacher as the school's strategy manager. This teacher has a reduced timetable so that she can provide cover, extra staffing and support for the Strategies.*
- *In a Northumberland middle school, the headteacher plays the role of manager of the Strategies, bringing experience to the role and giving it status.*

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The role of the subject leader and coordinator

Subject leaders and coordinators have a vital role in implementing the Strategies, particularly in supporting staff who are less confident with subject expertise or teaching skills. Their key responsibilities in relation to the Strategies are:

- working with teachers of the subject to develop their approaches to teaching and learning and use of the Frameworks;
- leading an annual review or audit to identify current strengths and areas for development in the subject, then planning, supporting and monitoring subsequent action;
- working with teachers and teaching assistants to identify their professional development needs in relation to the Strategies, and identifying how to meet these needs from the internal and external support, training and consultancy on offer;
- disseminating ideas learned on external training throughout the school;
- helping teachers, and particularly those working with Key Stage 3 pupils, to implement literacy and numeracy across the curriculum;
- implementing and monitoring intervention programmes to help underperforming pupils to catch up.

Where a middle school has separate subject leaders for literacy/English and mathematics in each key stage, their respective responsibilities need to be defined very clearly. A formal process for ensuring overall coordination throughout the school is also needed.

Literacy and mathematics coordinators at Key Stage 2 are being offered specific support and training on subject leadership during 2002–03. In Key Stage 3, a programme to develop the skills of subject leaders in the management of the Strategies is available, led by the school's strategy manager. In middle schools where the Key Stage 2 literacy and mathematics coordinators are also the leaders of the relevant subjects in Key Stage 3, there is no particular need for the coordinators to participate in both programmes. Middle deemed primary schools might perhaps choose the primary training and middle deemed secondary schools the Key Stage 3 programme.

Some Strategy publications are of particular relevance to subject leaders and coordinators.

- A *Handbook for literacy coordinators* and a *Handbook for mathematics coordinators* (DfES 0375/2002 and 0376/2002) incorporate training modules, a self-evaluation grid and a planner to help identify key management tasks in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies across a school year. The handbooks support the professional development of literacy and mathematics coordinators and stress that both primary Strategies are committed to the same principles.
- The *Subject leaders' development programme* (DfES 0389/2002) focuses on the leadership and management skills needed to raise standards in Key Stage 3, and helps schools to provide training and support for subject leaders. Each of seven modules follows up aspects of the self-evaluation booklet *Securing improvement: the role of subject leaders* (DfES 0102/2002) by providing examples, critical questions and short tasks in different situations. The programme has been introduced through LEA briefings for school strategy managers and can be adapted to address a school's particular circumstances. The *Subject leaders' development programme* and *Securing improvement* can be found on the Standards website: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/publications.

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Managing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum

The Key Stage 3 Strategy promotes literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. This cross-curricular work involves all staff. Raising standards in literacy and numeracy helps to raise standards in all subjects, not just in English and mathematics.

In Key Stage 3, secondary schools have identified a literacy coordinator who is a teacher from a subject other than English in order to stress the cross-curricular importance of literacy. For numeracy, an experienced mathematics teacher usually takes the lead. In middle schools, where many teachers may teach several subjects, there may be less need for the distinction. What remains crucial is the need for good liaison between staff in both key stages who manage English and literacy across the curriculum, and mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum, and time to work together.

Schools that have made an effective start in embedding literacy across the curriculum have identified a few whole-school literacy priorities, following an annual audit or review. Often, three priorities are adopted, covering reading, writing, and speaking and listening. These are adopted by all teachers and teaching strategies are built into schemes of work. A similar approach can be used to embed numeracy across the curriculum.

suggestions

Some suggestions for coordinating cross-curricular literacy and numeracy

Ask your strategy management group to coordinate cross-curricular developments. Specify its remit carefully.

Where subjects are jointly responsible for the teaching of cross-curricular literacy or numeracy objectives, identify who leads on teaching and assessing the objectives. For example, research skills may rest with English teachers or with a subject that does a lot of enquiry and research, such as history.

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The roles of the SENCO and the gifted and talented programme coordinator

The SENCO and the gifted and talented programme coordinator can best support the Strategies by:

- being part of the strategy management group;
- briefing teaching assistants and other support staff about the Strategies and their implications;
- helping to advise staff about making the best use of Strategy materials;
- supporting the development of teaching and learning programmes and complementary study-support to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils;
- ensuring that teaching plans for pupils with special educational needs focus on Framework objectives wherever possible, so that practice is inclusive and teaching matched with support;
- suggesting how catch-up and booster materials can be adapted for use with pupils who are working below expectations for their age group.

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Reviewing subjects

Schools commonly review work and progress in each subject across the school each year. The purpose is usually to:

- identify priorities for development, and plan action and the use of resources over the next year or so;
- decide which training and professional development opportunities would be of most benefit, which staff should attend external training, and how to disseminate information and ideas from external training to other colleagues;
- determine how to use most effectively any in-school support from a consultant.

The Strategies offer specific tools to support an audit or self-review in both key stages:

- the self-evaluation grid from the handbooks for literacy and numeracy coordinators;
- the *Middle school audit or annual review* (DfES 0423/2002) produced by the Key Stage 3 Strategy, which can be found on the website www.standards.dfes.gov.uk.

The self-evaluation grid is more specific and will help you to review literacy or mathematics developments in Key Stage 2.

The *Middle school audit or annual review* is for any subject and applies to all the years in a middle school. It has best-fit phrases throughout to keep recording to a minimum. The audit should give senior staff and subject and class teachers a clear view of where work is going well and where action needs to be focused.

A subject review works best when a senior manager and the relevant subject leader and coordinator lead it, but teachers of the subject in both key stages should be involved in discussions and contribute to gathering evidence. Collecting views of staff is relatively easy to achieve in one or two meetings but lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work may need to be spread over a few weeks. Information from performance management can be incorporated.

suggestions

Some suggestions for conducting audits or annual reviews

- Use the audit or review to determine the most important developments and action in terms of impact on expectations and standards.
- Use information from lessons that have been observed as part of performance management and supplement them by observing a further small sample of lessons across the year groups.
- Invite your local consultant to take part in the review, or help to refine it, and to feed back evaluative comments. This gives you a more thorough analysis and helps to make the consultant's in-school work better informed.

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Action planning

Priorities for action, including training and other professional development opportunities, are best linked to areas where pupils could be achieving higher standards. For example, if a school felt that pupils learning English as an additional language were generally underperforming, it could focus action on this aspect of provision. The main action points should fit readily into your whole-school improvement plan and relate directly to your targets, while more detailed action points will be in subject development plans.

suggestions

Some suggestions for action planning

Phase what you intend to do over a manageable period of time.

Link your action as far as possible with other school initiatives, such as boys' achievement or use of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant.

Incorporate into your school improvement plan any days of consultant support that you are allocated: for example, you may want a consultant to help with short-term planning, or to coach a teacher in particular teaching skills (see section 2, pages 5–6).

Include action to follow up whole-school training days related to the Strategies, such as days on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Monitoring and evaluating progress

You have probably extended to the Key Stage 3 Strategy the programme that you have in place to monitor and evaluate the primary Strategies. This will include analysing test results each year and making a judgement about progress over time of year groups, classes and particular groups of pupils (see also section 6, page 19).

Progress checks at least once a term will tell you whether intended action has been taken and how you are doing so far. Discussions with teachers and scrutiny of their plans and mark books will help to indicate whether their expectations of pupils are being pitched suitably high and whether messages from external training are being disseminated effectively to other teachers.

suggestions

Some suggestions for making progress checks

Give someone responsibility for making sure that progress checks take place.

Review progress at meetings of the management group and report it to the senior leadership team.

Decide what will count as evidence of progress.

Find quick methods of gathering evidence from different sources.

Use monitoring to build capacity and support professional development: for example, pair up a subject leader and a year leader to establish middle managers' confidence in monitoring outside their own subject specialism.

Remember that progress checks are only useful if they are followed up when weaknesses are found and if good practice is disseminated. Plan time to prepare, feed back and act on the outcomes of progress checks.

Success checks take place at the end of developmental work on a priority or target to decide how successful implementation has been. Checking success need not be complex or time consuming. It will consist largely of collating and drawing a conclusion about earlier progress checks.

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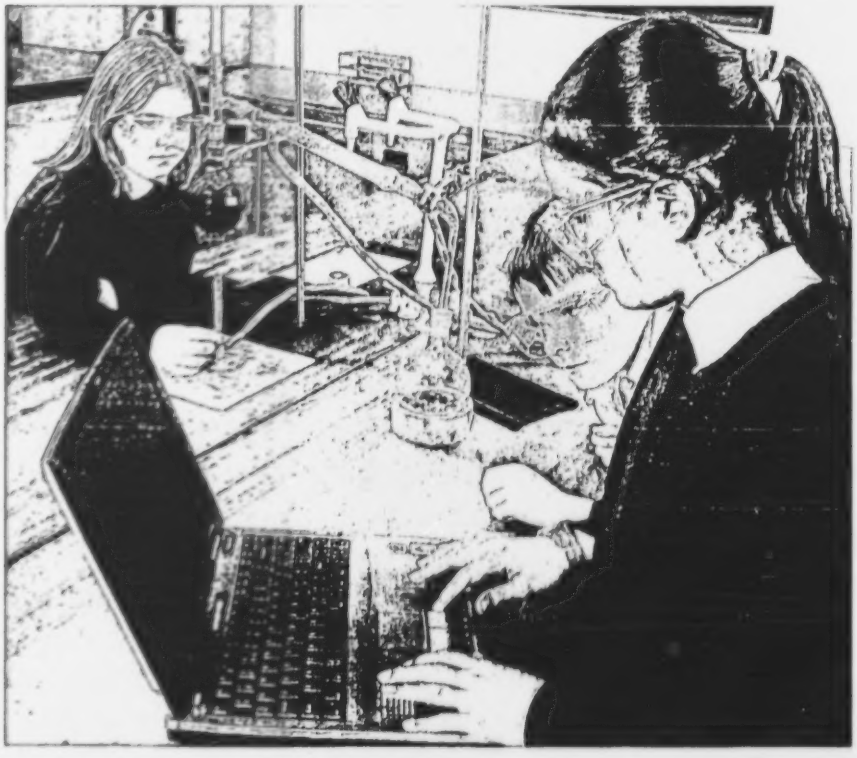
examples

Progress and success checks

- *In one middle school where staff had agreed to pursue a particular marking policy, coordinators jointly monitored this briefly each month by looking at the books of three very different pupils in each year group. Feedback was given to the staff as a whole and decisions about action agreed.*
- *In another school a subject leader asked teachers to concentrate on plenary sessions and homework tasks. She observed lesson endings in a range of classes and gave constructive feedback. After a month, the subject leader looked at the homework books of two pupils in each class to judge the impact. She decided on three points of action and pursued these in discussions with individual staff.*

Some progress checks are intuitive professional judgements, a 'feel' for whether things are going well or not. From time to time, more considered professional judgements are needed: for example, if teachers need to be persuaded about the validity of an intuitive judgement or if gathering independent evidence would be helpful. The action that senior and subject leaders and coordinators could take might include:

- looking at a sample of pupils' work;
- talking to pupils about their perceptions and attitudes: for example, what they have achieved and what they intend to progress to, whether the work has been too easy, too hard or about right, whether marking is helpful or not helpful, and why;
- giving a questionnaire to pupils, staff or parents to collect their views and opinions;
- observing teaching as part of performance management;
- analysing trends in data: for example, on pupils' performance or attendance.



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The role of the governing body

The chair of governors will ensure that all governors are aware of the importance of the Strategies, what the school hopes to achieve and its specific targets. Literacy and numeracy governors will take a special interest in the primary Strategies and may attend briefings or receive newsletters. They may also be involved with the Key Stage 3 Strategy, or the governing body's curriculum committee may carry out this role. Information for governors on the Strategies can be found at www.dfes.gov.uk/governor/publications.cfm.

suggestions

Some suggestions for strategy governors about their role

- Talk informally from time to time to the headteacher and the school's manager of the Strategies about overall progress and any issues.
- Use occasional visits to the school to talk informally with class teachers and pupils about the differences the Strategies are making.
- Give occasional short briefings at meetings of the whole governing body.
- Report each term on one of the Strategies and how it is going in the school.
- Promote the involvement of parents by including a presentation on an aspect of the Strategies at a parents' evening. Let parents know how they can best help their children to achieve their targets.
- Write a progress report for the annual governors' report to parents.

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5 Allocating curriculum time

Teaching time

The Frameworks suggest that schools provide:

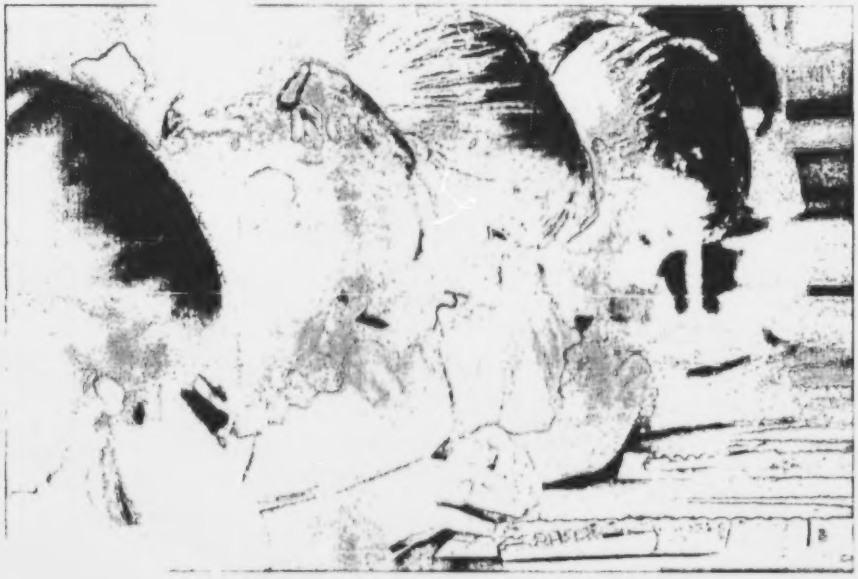
- **in Key Stage 2**
  a daily literacy hour, plus time for speaking and listening, drama, and extended, independent and individual reading, either as dedicated time or as part of other subjects;

  a daily mathematics lesson of up to one hour;
- **in Key Stage 3**, in each year group
  around three hours each week for each of English, mathematics and science;

  a dedicated one-hour lesson each week for ICT.

Besides the time needed for other National Curriculum subjects and religious education, time also needs to be found for:

- intervention programmes to meet particular learning needs, such as *Further literacy support* and *Springboard* (see page 25);
- Year 6 booster classes to help borderline pupils maximise their performance in the National Curriculum tests (see pages 26–27).



Although the demands for curriculum time vary for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, senior leadership teams need to specify how time will be used in ways that will bring about coherence and continuity throughout the middle school years.

Many middle schools operate a class teacher system for Key Stage 2, with different lengths of lessons throughout the day, sometimes with different patterns of lessons in different classes. Some extend this system to Year 7, especially where there is a single Year 7 class. Key Stage 3 is more commonly organised to allow specialist teaching, with lessons based on a common unit of time. However Key Stage 3 is organised, aim to spread English lessons across the week so that they are not bunched together, and the same for mathematics and science.

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example

Allocating time in a 9–13 middle school

Subject	Average time per week in Y5 and Y6 (h:min)	No. of 40-minute blocks of time allocated per week				Average time per week in Y7 and Y8 (h:min)
		Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	
Literacy and numeracy skills or enrichment programme	1:20	2	2	–	–	1:15
English	5:20	8.5	7.5	5	4	3:00
Mathematics	5:00	7.5	7.5	5	4	3:00
Science	2:00	3	3	4	5	3:00
Art, design and technology	2:00	3	3	4	4	2:40
ICT	1:20	2	2	2	2	1:20
MFL	0:20	–	1	3	4	2:20
History, geography, RE	2:40	4	4	6	6	4:00
Citizenship				1	1	0:40
Music and PE	2:40	4	4	4	4	2:40
PSHE	0:40	1	1	1	1	0:40
Totals	**23:20**		**35**			**24:35**

Lessons are organised in blocks of time that subdivide into 40 minutes: 2 hours before morning break, 1 hour 20 minutes from break to lunch and 1 hour 20 minutes in the afternoon. Morning registration is 10 minutes, with 5 minutes in the afternoon. A 15-minute assembly takes place before afternoon lessons. The clustering of time allows for flexible lesson lengths (40 minutes, 1 hour, 1 hour 20 minutes, or 2 hours), a daily literacy hour and mathematics lesson in Key Stage 2, and the combining of some aspects of different topics and subjects. Practical subjects are taught in longer lessons.

Each class has a class teacher. Class teachers teach all Key Stage 2 lessons, with the exception of music and PE, which are partly supported by specialists. This arrangement allows Key Stage 2 teachers non-contact time of about 1 hour per week. Key Stage 3 teachers have non-contact time of 1 hour 20 minutes per week.

One lesson each week is allocated to a PSHE programme, taught throughout the school at the same time by class teachers.

For Key Stage 2 pupils, some time each week is allocated for class teachers to use flexibly, for extra catch-up provision in literacy and numeracy skills for those pupils who need it, for special needs support or to enrich work in other subjects. Teaching assistants give extra support in these sessions.

Key Stage 3 lessons are taught by subject specialists. For Key Stage 3, there is a shorter lunch break. Each afternoon starts with 15 minutes of brisk teaching by the class teacher, alternating each day between literacy and numeracy skills. (The school's Key Stage 2 results have risen steadily to around the national average but relatively few pupils achieve level 5.) The school's literacy coordinator and the head of mathematics coordinate the programmes for these sessions.

The school has decided recently to strengthen its teaching of ICT in discrete teaching time, to start teaching French in Year 6 and to offer a second modern foreign language in Year 8.

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Allocating staff to teaching groups

Care is needed with the allocation of the most experienced teachers to teaching groups: the pupils who need most support may be in the intake year.

Where a middle school adopts a primary model of class teaching in Years 5 and 6, there can be more than a dozen teachers involved in teaching English, with the same number involved in mathematics and the same again in science. Some schools adopt strategies to reduce the size of core subject teams so that each subject is taught by fewer teachers. This makes it easier to achieve consistency of approach and good progression. It also reduces the number of subject meetings that primary teachers need to attend and the number of different subjects for which they have to plan lessons.

example

Reducing the number of subjects taught by each teacher

- *One 9–13 middle school reduced the size of the teaching teams for English and mathematics by asking Key Stage 2 teachers to teach either English or mathematics to two classes, rather than both subjects to one class. Each teacher was consulted about his or her preferred choice. Before the change, teachers feared they would become de-skilled in part of their primary expertise.*

  Afterwards, teachers, subject leaders and the headteacher were all very positive about the results. The subject leaders felt more able to fulfil their curriculum leadership roles, teachers felt their teaching was more manageable and that their preparation time had reduced, and the headteacher's monitoring showed that the quality of teaching and learning had much improved. Effective liaison ensured that class teachers, who remained responsible for the overview of pupils' progress and for report writing, were well informed about each pupil's progress in English and mathematics.

Some middle schools capitalise on the range of expertise among staff by continuing with class groups taught by a single teacher in Key Stage 3. Others draw on subject expertise in Key Stage 3 by providing at least some specialist teaching in Key Stage 2.

examples

Capitalising on the expertise and experience of staff

- *To help the least able pupils in Year 7, an 8–12 middle school arranges for English, mathematics and science to be taught in Year 7 by one experienced primary teacher. She teaches one class with approximately 20 pupils for these subjects. All other Year 7 pupils are taught separate English, mathematics and science lessons by three specialist teachers, with an average class size of 29.*
- *Another 8–12 middle school provides specialist teaching of art and design throughout the whole school. Class teachers teach all other subjects. The time freed up for class teachers by this arrangement is used for non-contact time.*

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6 Using data

The Ofsted report *Changing schools* (HMI 550), published in June 2002, observed that after pupils transferred to their next school they were often given work at an inappropriate level in the first few months, or even throughout the first year. This left pupils either marking time or floundering, with consequent loss of their interest and motivation.

If schools are to match work to the needs and abilities of incoming pupils they need to receive and to use relevant information about pupils' achievements. The **common transfer form** (CTF) helps to provide information for the next school in a standard form.

Middle schools have the advantage that it is easy to transfer attainment data from the Key Stage 2 national tests to Year 7 teachers who teach in the same school. It is also straightforward to make exchange visits to classrooms across the key stages and to exchange and discuss samples of pupils' work. But problems similar to those reported by Ofsted still exist at the interface between first or lower and middle schools. The data for 2001 on pupils' attainment in Key Stage 2 (the latest available when this booklet went to print) suggest that middle-school pupils in Year 6 might still be affected slightly in English and significantly in mathematics by their change of school two or three years previously.

Subject	Middle schools			All schools with Y6 pupils		
	Boys	Girls	All pupils	Boys	Girls	All pupils
English	69%	79%	74%	70%	80%	75%
Mathematics	67%	65%	66%	71%	70%	71%
Science	87%	88%	87%	87%	88%	87%

Key Stage 2 test results: 2001 Source: Analytical Services Division, DfES

The challenge for middle schools is to ensure that the principles that apply to ensuring smooth transition from Year 6 to Year 7 extend to transfer into and out of the school part-way through a key stage.

However, transfer of records does not on its own ensure that the information is used effectively. Too often, pupils are retested after they have changed schools, which would not be necessary if attainment data were transferred smoothly and trusted.

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suggestions

Some suggestions for using information from teacher assessments and tests

Use data to help reach agreement on the standard and quality of work expected in a particular subject for pupils entering the school.

Analyse data to identify which aspects of the curriculum are well taught so that you can capitalise on effective practice. Ask what causes the peaks or dips in the data and consider how you can use what is well taught to improve what is not well taught.

Analyse data to identify and track the progress of individual pupils or groups of pupils who are out of step with their peers in a particular subject.

Use data to ensure that new work is appropriately challenging for all pupils and adjust lesson plans to take account of pupils' previous achievements.

Use data as a basis for creating targets for a group of pupils.

Use data to inform decisions about grouping pupils by attainment, where this arrangement is used.

***case** study*

Using data to support transfer from lower to middle school

A cluster of lower and middle schools in Bedfordshire analysed data from Key Stage 2 test results, and from the QCA optional tests for Years 4 and 5. The analysis indicated a lower level of performance in writing than the schools had expected. The headteachers agreed that a series of sessions for all Key Stage 2 teachers was needed, led by an external consultant. The sessions were intended to:

- *develop a greater awareness of the different writing requirements in the National Literacy Strategy;*
- *raise awareness of teaching strategies to develop these types of writing in English and other subjects;*
- *exchange and discuss the standard and quality of examples of children's writing;*
- *disseminate best practice across the group of schools.*

The project was supported and partly funded by the LEA. Several twilight sessions were held, at which a lead talk was given by a practising teacher from a lower or middle school. This was followed by groups of teachers from both lower and middle schools sharing their experiences and discussing types of writing.

An outcome of the project was an increase of several percentage points in the Key Stage 2 writing results. The project also created an effective model for professional development, so it is now being extended to Key Stage 3.

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case *studies*

Using data to track pupils' progress

Two Mile Ash Middle School in Milton Keynes has made extensive use of ICT to track pupils' progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 3 and to inform debate about teaching and learning. Attainment data are stored electronically and are analysed to identify underachievement, set pupils' targets and celebrate good progress. Class teachers are encouraged to use the data to see if any groups of pupils in their classes are underperforming and, if so, to ask themselves why.

Using data to identify underachievement and raise standards

Three Staffordshire 9–13 middle schools have taken part in an initiative to build on their strengths and to target the issues holding back improvements in standards. The initiative aimed to establish positive and clearly focused leadership that would seek solutions to problems.

The schools first agreed the rationale and timescales for the initiative. The initial focus was Year 5 in the 2000–01 school year, with an acknowledgement that expertise developed would be transferable to other transition years. The intended outcomes for the teachers involved were:

- *better understanding and use of data;*
- *deeper subject knowledge and understanding;*
- *confidence in monitoring and evaluating the work of others.*

The programme involved an initial assessment of strengths and weaknesses of Year 5 pupils based on data analysis, curriculum analysis, teacher assessments, available reports and evaluation activities. Each school provided an audit report to an agreed format and the information was shared among the group. Outline improvement plans were discussed.

Next a strategy to raise standards in writing was developed. This included:

- *identifying a small number of writing objectives for pupils, so that pupils could be involved in formulating their targets and making self-assessments against them;*
- *developing a four-week programme to teach the objectives, integrating reading, writing and sentence-level activities, and incorporating modelling by teachers to help pupils to reason.*

Samples of work from the participating schools were assessed, next steps identified and intervention programmes planned. The literacy coordinators visited each school to observe teaching of the groups containing borderline level 4 pupils and to scrutinise pupils' work. Individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses were detailed, together with their targets. From this exercise, the teachers identified points for development, and what the pupils' targets should be for the next stage.

All three schools have improved the proportion of pupils reaching level 4 by the end of Key Stage 2.

Using data to support target setting

Northumberland LEA provides for each of its middle schools projections for level 4+ and level 5+ at Key Stage 2, using prior attainment at Key Stage 1 and data in the 'Autumn package'. This information is made available to schools, advisers and consultants and is used by them jointly to establish school targets and plan support programmes.

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7 Supporting school transfer

A Homerton College/DfES project is evaluating transitions and transfer in the middle years of schooling from age 7 to age 14 (see the website creict.homerton.cam.ac.uk/transfer). The project has found that:

- considerable improvements have taken place in liaison arrangements so that social effects on pupils who change school are now minimal;
- problems remain with continuity in pupils' learning – nearly 40% of pupils lose motivation and make no progress in the year after transfer into Key Stage 3;
- in middle schools, pupils make less progress in Key Stage 2 than in Years 7 and 8.

The Homerton project has examined the factors that help pupils to change school successfully. Where pupils remained positive and made smooth progress after transfer, partnerships of contributory and receiving schools had:

- used some form of bridging or transition unit to provide curriculum continuity;
- organised a summer school for those who needed to catch up in literacy or numeracy (some had also run a summer programme for gifted pupils in the arts or drama);
- extended their induction programmes over and above the normal one-day visit.

Extended induction arrangements included regular use of the receiving school's facilities, such as the science laboratory, ICT suite, gym, playing fields or drama studio. Some transfer schools organised after-school clubs for feeder schools. Others organised days in which pupils from each side of the transfer worked together in groups.

case studies

Extending transition links in Milton Keynes

- *St Paul's RC secondary school has teamed up with all its partner middle schools to provide specialist teaching and access to facilities. Year 7 pupils spend one day per fortnight at St Paul's to study some aspects of science, design and technology, and art.*
- *Secondary teachers in several clusters spend a half-day each week teaching in their partner middle schools. This is especially common in modern foreign languages, creative arts and PE.*

Suffolk is one of the LEAs involved in the Homerton project. The LEA's conclusions are that some of the factors in successful transfer are:

- good liaison and a will at senior management level for schools to work together;
- a management group, backed by teacher groups working on specific tasks;
- joint discussion about the standards of work expected and approaches to teaching and learning;
- sharing of schemes of work and whole-school curriculum maps to check for continuity and to deal with possible duplication;
- planned activities and identified resources to support them;
- the use of ICT to improve the transfer and use of assessment data;
- good monitoring of pupils' experience, views and progress.

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Transition units for English and mathematics

The transition units for English and mathematics (DfES 0113/2002 and 0118/2002) provide work to be taught near the end of Year 6 and early in Year 7. Themes for the English units are 'Authors' and 'Text', and for mathematics 'Number' and 'Problem solving' (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3). More units are being developed to support transfer into and from middle schools; the first of these, a Year 4 to Year 5 transition unit in English, is now on www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy.

The purpose of these units is twofold:

- to continue work that pupils are familiar with and so ease their transfer to a new school by reducing their anxiety;
- to give teachers in the receiving school a diagnostic tool based on a common unit of work, so that they can gain a better understanding of what pupils can do and avoid setting work at too low a level.

Locally developed units, used by all schools in a 'pyramid', can serve the same purpose. Regardless of whether the units are local or national, or are for core or foundation subjects, any work that pupils do for the units should go with them when they change school. It is best to mark the work with comments, rather than grades, so that receiving teachers know the feedback that pupils have been given.

Summer schools

Your upper or high school may offer a summer school to help the transfer of borderline pupils, either from Year 7 to Year 8, or from Year 8 to Year 9.

A summer school might be run from 5 to 10 days in the last fortnight of the summer term or at Easter, or on Saturday mornings during the summer term. It is usually a joint venture, staffed by a small team of teachers drawn from both the contributory and receiving schools, with one of them taking responsibility for the overall coordination.

Part of your role is to recruit summer-school pupils and identify their particular weaknesses in English/literacy or mathematics/numeracy, or their talents and needs if the summer school is for gifted and talented pupils.

suggestions

Some suggestions for middle schools contributing to a summer school

- Liaise with your upper or high school to give summer-school pupils specific targets to achieve and make sure that they understand them.
- Design a promotional leaflet for parents, stressing the importance of a pupil's full attendance at the summer school.
- Complement the leaflet for parents with a leaflet for pupils, stressing a two-way 'contract', including a commitment on attendance.

The best literacy and numeracy summer schools have a realistic focus and don't attempt to target too many teaching objectives. Pupils' 'sticking points' are addressed and the teaching is lively. Plans for the summer school include how the work will be followed up in the transfer school in the autumn term.

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8 Organising intervention programmes

The principle of 'little and often' is a key to the success of intervention programmes to help pupils to catch up. They depend on good organisation to ensure regular, systematic teaching, and to allow pupils to benefit if necessary from both literacy and numeracy programmes. Good arrangements for their overall management is crucial for their success.

suggestions

Some suggestions for managing intervention programmes

Identify early on who should take overall responsibility for intervention programmes. In English in particular, there could be several contenders, such as English or special needs staff or the literacy coordinator.

Specify how to respond when pupils are struggling with aspects of literacy or mathematics and who should deal with it. Make sure that responsibility does not fall through the cracks between the class teacher or form tutor, subject teacher, SENCO and English or mathematics teacher.

Good information from previous teachers, allied with attainment data from the national tests or QCA's optional tests, can help to identify pupils who will benefit most from intervention programmes. It is useful to include pupils' strengths and weaknesses and their personal curricular targets.

The Standards Fund currently provides some funding for support for catch-up programmes, such as a teaching assistant. There may also be other sources of funding for supporting particular groups of pupils, such as the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. If teaching assistants who support catch-up programmes are given some training they are able to help pupils more effectively.

suggestions

Some suggestions for deploying a teaching assistant

You could ask a teaching assistant to:

team-teach and jointly plan lessons with the class teacher;

prepare extra or modify existing learning resources;

give targeted support in lessons to an individual pupil or a small group of pupils;

offer particular pupils some pre-lesson tutoring or support;

withdraw pupils from lessons for a short temporary period for extra support or pre-lesson preparation;

support extra sessions within or outside the school day;

follow up catch-up or booster classes in mainstream lessons across the curriculum.

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Key Stage 2

Literacy and mathematics catch-up programmes at Key Stage 2 are mainly for pupils who achieved level 2c at the end of Key Stage 1 and who, with some extra help, should achieve level 4 by the end of Key Stage 2. Each programme is designed to accelerate pupils' progress back to age-related expectation.

- *Further literacy support* (DfES 0359/2002), introduced in 2002, is for Year 5. Pupils are identified in the autumn term. The programme is designed to operate in the spring, and if necessary the summer, term. Each week, it uses a combination of group sessions led by a teacher in the literacy hour, plus three short sessions run by a teaching assistant.
- *Springboard 4* (DfES 0092/2001) is designed for use with a group of six to eight pupils. Each of 10 units is made up of two 30-minute sessions, to be led by a teaching assistant.
- *Springboard 5* (DfES 0151/2000) consists of 10 sessions to be taught by the class teacher, with 10 follow-up sessions to be supported by a teaching assistant.
- *Springboard 6* (DfES 0778/2001) consists of 22 half-hour lessons, usually led by a teacher. The lessons track the objectives set out in the Year 6, spring term, mathematics unit plans.

A Key Stage 2 management guide, *Including all pupils in the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson* (DfES 0465/2002), contains a section on the management of primary intervention programmes, and helps schools to align these with the Code of Practice for special educational needs (DfES 581/2001).

Key Stage 3

The Year 7 catch-up programmes are targeted at pupils who enter Year 7 at level 3.

The *Literacy progress units* for Year 7 (DfES 0473/2001 to 0478/2001) are best taught in three 20-minute slots each week, as an addition to normal English lessons. Whole-class versions of some of the units are available but the best arrangement is small, targeted groups. It is not intended that every level 3 pupil should follow every progress unit. Year 6 test scores for reading and writing need to be separated to ensure that pupils are not studying units needlessly.

The *Springboard 7* mathematics programme (DfES 0049/2001) can be organised in various ways. It can:

- form a complete course of about three hours each week for a whole class of pupils for the autumn and spring terms of Year 7;
- in a Year 7 mixed-ability class, supplement the main mathematics course at points for particular groups of pupils;
- be used selectively to form an intensive extra course of about 60 minutes a week, taken as a weekly extra lesson, or taught in three 20-minute extra slots. (This option best fits the 'little and often' principle but may be the most difficult to arrange.)

A new progress test for the end of Year 7 can help teachers to judge how much progress pupils have made in their first year of Key Stage 3.

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examples

Organising catch-up classes and related activities

- *In one 8–12 middle school, literacy support in Years 4 to 7 is scheduled in 20-minute sessions taught on three days each week by class teachers. During the sessions, other pupils work on independent tasks involving reading and writing, or on ICT. Numeracy support, based on Springboard materials, is offered on the other two days in the week. A supplementary session for pupils from any year group is provided in an after-school mathematics club held once a week.*
- *In a middle school with mixed-ability classes, pairs of classes are timetabled simultaneously for English and mathematics. Teaching assistants support each of two classes in a one-hour teaching period, giving 20 to 25 minutes of support during group work in each lesson. Catch-up materials are used in the group work.*

Pupils working well below expectations for their age

Some pupils in middle schools may be working well below expectations for their age and need more intensive help. Strategy materials are being developed to support them.

case study

Pupils below level 3

Mill Vale Middle School and two special schools near Dunstable have aimed to integrate some of the special-school pupils into a middle school. All pupils are taught together for English, science, design and technology, and religious education. For other subjects, two 'unit' classes have been formed; one in Key Stage 2 and one in Key Stage 3, with six and five pupils respectively. Each class has a teacher and two learning support assistants. The headteacher feels that the pupils have moved on greatly – particularly with the development of independence. She quotes the pupils as saying: 'I feel normal', 'I'm glad I'm at an ordinary school'.

Year 6 booster classes

Year 6 booster classes are extra support for borderline pupils between levels 3 and 4 in English or mathematics. The aim is to help pupils to do as well as possible in the Key Stage 2 tests so that they enter Key Stage 3 confident and better prepared. As with catch-up classes, there are three main ways of timetabling booster support:

- in extra classes and study support time before or after school or in the lunch break;
- by withdrawal from lessons;
- in English and mathematics lessons.

Extra sessions in out-of-school hours are voluntary and pupils' attendance can sometimes wane. Sessions in short bursts, with gaps in between, led by a different teacher, can often help to retain pupils' motivation.

The most successful booster activities result from good liaison between the teacher leading them and the class teacher, and are targeted at specific pupils and focused on their 'blocks' to learning. The activities are enjoyable, short and intensive, and they often have elements of reward associated with them.

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examples

Organising booster classes

- *One middle school offers extra classes for English and mathematics after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The programme runs from half-term in the autumn term through to April, when revision in normal lessons starts. Thirty or more out of over 100 pupils in Year 6 attend one or both of the sessions on a voluntary basis.*
- *Another school offers booster classes during the Easter holidays. The classes are followed up by mentoring for pupils in small groups to go through practice test papers and give them detailed feedback.*

Year 8 mentoring

The Key Stage 3 Strategy provides support for Year 8 pupils who are not achieving the levels expected for their age group. The pupils may lack motivation or seem bored or even disruptive in lessons. Three key features distinguish these pupils:

- they are underachieving across several subjects – it is not simply that they have become disaffected with one subject or one teacher;
- their needs are not primarily pastoral but academic;
- there is evidence that they are capable of doing much better.

The intention is to provide the pupils with a personal learning mentor whom they meet at intervals. The degree of support could vary: for example, there could be fortnightly meetings for a few pupils and half-termly meetings for others. The support is intended to provide attention and encouragement and so draw pupils back into mainstream learning. It should be focused on pupils' current work so that they can see the immediate value.

The learning mentor needs to be versatile, flexible and experienced enough to evaluate pupils' needs and to offer a suitable variety of support activities.

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suggestions

Some suggestions for mentoring activities

You could ask a mentor to:

- review current work with pupils and agree their personal learning targets;
- support pupils' progress through discussion, coaching and tuition, for example, on taking notes, researching, better presentation, communication skills;
- draw in subject-based support as necessary, and coordinate support from volunteer helpers, parents or friends;
- advise pupils on organising homework, revision, files, bag and kit;
- support pupils with their homework;
- debrief pupils after tests and advise how to improve future work;
- liaise with staff teaching the pupils and give them feedback on the advice pupils have been given.

examples

Year 8 mentoring

- *Ten pupils in Year 8 are supported by 30-minute mentor meetings each week for a term. An experienced teacher who has credibility with the pupils and an interest in study skills supports the sessions. There is a particular emphasis on pupils who are disorganised or who lack independent study skills.*
- *Fifteen pupils are supported by hour-long mentoring sessions every half-term for a year. The mentor, a retired teacher, liaises closely with the head of Year 8 and gives three days each half-term to the activity. Sessions are supplemented by specific support identified in the sessions.*
- *Three staff put aside two days each half-term to meet with 24 pupils to set, monitor and evaluate progress against personal learning targets.*

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9 Provision for able pupils

Middle schools can draw on Framework objectives and programmes of study from three key stages and are well placed to provide suitably for all their pupils. For recent Strategy documents on support for pupils with special educational needs and for those learning English as an additional language see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk. This section is about provision for able pupils.

Identification

The challenge is to create a classroom climate that encourages all abilities to emerge and flourish. Fostering equality of opportunity involves identifying those whose ability may not necessarily emerge in conventional tests.

suggestions

Some suggestions for identifying able pupils

- Discuss at a whole-staff meeting the characteristics of high ability and potential in all subject contexts, not just in core subjects.
- Review individual pupils' progress regularly.
- Scrutinise systematically the widest possible range of information.
- Give special attention to groups likely to be under-represented.
- Involve parents and pupils in the process.

Auditing achievement using Strategy documents (see section 4, page 12) gives a perspective on the effectiveness of your identification and provision across the curriculum and across the school. Look specifically at the progress made by pupils whose achievements at the end of Key Stages 1 or 2 were significantly above national expectations. Seek out pupils who are potentially able but who underachieve, perhaps because of personality or attitude, schooling or teaching, home background or language.

Schemes of work

There should be planned learning opportunities in every classroom and subject for pupils to demonstrate and develop high levels of aptitude through enrichment, extension and acceleration, linked with specific curricular targets. Ways of using objectives to ensure that the level of demand reflects the potential of pupils include:

- clustering objectives to engage with a range of skills;
- weighting objectives to give more learning time to higher-order skills, such as enquiry or reasoning, and less to the use of technical skills;
- applying objectives in different areas of enquiry, and to solving related problems, to add breadth and depth to their study;
- accelerating the pace at which objectives are covered;
- increasingly as pupils get older, negotiating objectives with them.

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Structuring lessons

The structuring of lessons recommended by the Strategies features lively, focused openings, effective whole-class shared experience led by the teacher, development through group and independent work, and in plenary sessions recognition of what has been learned. Each part of a lesson offers opportunities for differentiated provision for able pupils. For example:

suggestions

Some suggestions for starters

Have a range of tasks based on the same focus or text, or that address the same objective through differentiated texts or tasks.

Use tasks, examples, puzzles or problems that require higher-order thinking skills.

Set investigations across a sequence of lessons.

Use differentiated or open-ended questioning.

Use follow-up questions – 'What makes you think that?' 'Can you justify your decision?' 'Can you explain how that would work?' 'What if we changed ...?'

Expect pupils to articulate rules or patterns, generalise, explain their reasoning, give counter-examples ...

Some suggestions for working with a whole class

Differentiate expectations and prepare questions targeted at particular pupils.

Make it possible for able pupils to enter tasks at a higher point.

Prompt able pupils to give contributions that extend the experience of all.

Model problem solving and teach problem-solving skills.

Involve pupils in modelling or demonstrating.

Some suggestions for working with groups

Identify the needs that able pupils have in common, and group accordingly in task-specific groups. Give them group or individual targets, not just class targets.

Give able pupils roles in group work that reflect their abilities, including the opportunity to collaborate and contribute to the success of others.

Provide able pupils with a broader range of texts and tasks.

Encourage all pupils to pose questions, not just to provide answers.

Plan tasks that will ensure able pupils develop higher-order learning skills, and their abilities to enquire, reason, and think logically and creatively.

Plan tasks that build on pupils' cultural backgrounds, recognising and using the linguistic expertise of multilingual pupils.

Compact group tasks for able pupils. Give them a limited focus to promote depth, or add depth by providing more complex or more detailed tasks.

Give all learning a time frame, but match timing to potential.

Some suggestions for plenaries

Encourage able pupils to take notes for feedback, and consider a different timescale for feedback, for example, via an OHP or using ICT at the end of the week.

Ask able pupils to articulate the skills involved in a task or activity.

Ask able pupils to apply or extend their skills to new cases or different cases, problems or contexts.

Expect pupils to explain, not just present, using appropriate terminology.

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Teaching and learning

High-quality teaching and learning, discussed in section 2, page 4, is the basis of effective provision for all pupils, but able pupils can go beyond conventional expectations for their year group. They are often independent learners who are successful in pursuing learning on their own, especially when they have a mentor to turn to for advice.

suggestions

Some suggestions for developing able pupils' independent work

Set investigative research tasks to foster originality, independence and initiative.

Teach able pupils from an early age the skills they need to study independently: for example, how to extract information and ideas from oral and written presentations;

Vary the expected styles of response.

Promote extended reading, writing and problem solving.

Monitor independent reading around the subject.

Expect able pupils to use ICT in their independent work. Encourage e-mail link-ups with able pupils in other schools and ask older students or trainee teachers to be 'e-mentors'.

Some schools make special arrangements for their able pupils: for example, extra-curricular clubs to extend and enrich class work, or master classes, perhaps run by an advanced skills teacher, or a leading English, mathematics or science teacher. These arrangements offer extra opportunities to foster both collaborative and independent work.

Where gifted pupils can be expected to achieve the highest levels at a younger age, you could consider early entry for the Key Stage 2 or 3 tests, having first discussed the implications with partner upper or high schools. Gifted pupils might also be entered for QCA's World Class Tests in mathematics and problem solving for 9- and 13-year-olds (for information, see www.worldclassarena.org (World Class Tests)).

case *studies*

Provision for able pupils in Suffolk middle schools

- *At St James' CE Middle School, gifted pupils are extended through a More Able Pupil Project in Years 7 and 8. Small numbers from each year benefit from extension studies set half-termly in the form of collaborative projects organised by different subjects. Through these, pupils' capability in independent research and problem solving has been enhanced.*
- *Needham Market Middle School has introduced a 'more able child' policy, which identifies and boosts the overall learning of gifted and talented pupils. Extra teaching groups exist in some subjects to cater for these pupils. Gifted pupils are entered for GCSE intermediate level mathematics. The policy has contributed to better achievement at level 5 in the Key Stage 2 tests.*
- *Stowmarket Middle School has a stimulating, extensive range of activities to enhance and extend pupils' experiences. These include a full range of sports activities, language exchanges, drama productions, visits, and a wide range of clubs to foster talent across all areas of the curriculum.*

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10 Summary and points for action

This guide tries to give advice based on experiences of the Strategies. It also looks ahead to what might be needed to embed them in the everyday life of a middle school. Not all the advice will be applicable to your school. Almost certainly, you will already have some systems in place to get you off to a good start with implementation. But as a final checklist, here is a summary.

- Do you have an overall management or steering group so that the implementation of the Strategies is coherent?
- Do you have good systems in place to monitor pupils' progress and sample the quality of their work throughout the key stages to help judge the impact of the Strategies over time?
- Are there things that you could do to strengthen the teaching of plenary sessions to help pupils crystallise what they have learned?
- Have you extended the literacy and numeracy across the curriculum initiatives to the whole school? Are you aware of the extent to which literacy and numeracy teaching objectives are evident in lessons in other subjects?
- Do you have effective arrangements in place for your catch-up programmes? Are there ways you could make better use of data to help focus on pupils' weaknesses? Do teachers select and use those parts of the catch-up materials that will help to remedy the weaknesses? Do teaching assistants support these programmes and have they had adequate training to do so?
- Are you satisfied with your provision for your most able pupils? Is there more that could be done to broaden and deepen their study?
- Do you need to give greater attention across the curriculum to identifying, communicating and pursuing curricular targets for individuals and groups of pupils?
- What more could be done to ensure that pupils transferring into and out of the school do not falter in their learning and progress?
- What will be needed now and in the longer term to embed the three Strategies and make them part of the everyday life of the school?

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